California Department of Education
Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

HIGH SCHOOL!

A Periodical for California's High School Educators

A Message from the Superintendent

Winter 2006

The California Department of Education is here to provide assistance and resources to you in your efforts to help your students gain the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Student support and timely interventions are key to academic achievement. These efforts are the theme of this Winter 2006 periodical.

I am very pleased that overall student academic achievement in California is continuing to improve. Much of this improvement can be attributed to high-quality educators, coherent instructional frameworks, and standards-aligned instructional materials. One of the major goals of my high school initiative is to also close the achievement gap that exists among all students; for many of these students, closing the achievement gap requires more than academics. Supporting students' physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs is essential.

Many of our culturally diverse socioeconomically disadvantaged, English learner, and special education populations require extra help from the school to become academically successful. In addition, students in high school need specialized help to navigate the uncertainty of adolescence, make the right choices, stay in school, and prepare for postsecondary work and school.

The California Department of Education recognizes the need for learning support and offers specialized programs to assist with these needs. Some of the best approaches, however, are strategies and personalized relationships that are homegrown by local communities.

I applaud the teachers, counselors, administrators, community agency staff, and volunteers throughout California who spend countless hours developing caring relationships with students and taking the time to assess what additional services they need to succeed in school and prepare for future careers. I want to extend a special thank you to the staffs of Escondido High School and Lowell High School who agreed to be interviewed for this issue. I appreciate your diligence in meeting the needs of students and your willingness to share your experiences.

JACK O'CONNELL

Theme

Student Support and Interventions

Inside this issue:

Prevention and Intervention Strategies Support All Students

In California, a wide variety of prevention and intervention strategies are aimed at supporting students. Appropriate preventative measures should always be the first strategy in minimizing and possibly eliminating the need for interventions later. If and when a student does struggle, it is imperative to recognize problems immediately and to employ effective interventions to get the student back on track.

Although there is always some overlap, prevention and intervention strategies generally can be categorized as cognitive and noncognitive. Cognitive preventions and interventions are those that directly assist a student in the acquisition of academic learning. (These typically include curriculum, instruction by qualified teachers, standards-aligned instructional materials, aligned assessment, intervention instructional materials, additional class periods, study skills classes, and standards-based career and technical classes). Results from cognitive prevention and intervention are more easily measured and are directly correlated with student achievement.

"Cognitive preventions and interventions are those that directly assist a student in the acquisition of academic learning."

There are also noncognitive preventions and interventions that are less direct but, nonetheless, important supports for student academic achievement. Without physical, emotional, social, and intellectual support, most adolescents and particularly higher-risk adolescents will not make the gains educators expect. These interventions are more difficult to correlate with test scores; usually, other indicators of success are used, such as attendance rates, dropout data, discipline and expulsion data, and counseling referrals. Noncognitive interventions include a range of programs and strategies that keep students healthy, safe, and engaged in learning, such as youth development, character education, attendance and dropout prevention programs; nutrition, anti-bullying, service-learning, and before-and-after-school programs; and interest-based electives, including visual and performing arts, physical education, and advisories.

Cognitive Interventions

The No Child Left Behind Act and California's Academic Performance Index (API) both focus on the achievement of significant subgroups and the closing of achievement gaps. Schools that consistently fail to make their growth targets by either measure are subject to state and federal sanctions. The California State Board of Education has endorsed nine Essential Program Components for each grade span (elementary, middle, high) as cognitive interventions for schools with students who are struggling to meet academic targets in English-language arts and mathematics.

Interventions are divided into three groups:

- Benchmark interventions* are intended for students who are satisfactorily achieving grade-level standards but on occasion may require additional assistance and support for specific

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* Benchmark interventions are discussed in the *Reading/Language Arts Framework* but are not included in the Essential Program Components Academic Program Surveys.

standards and concepts. These students would benefit from ancillary materials, tutoring, software assistance, additional time with the teacher, and differentiated instruction. Without this support they could fall behind and fail to score at the proficient level on statewide tests.

- Strategic interventions are intended for (1) middle grade students who are one to two years below grade-level expectations; and (2) high school students who are at or above the sixth-grade standards in English-language arts but are not able to pass the *California High School Exit Examination* (*CAHSEE*) and high school students who are unable to demonstrate proficiency in Algebra I or are at risk of failing the mathematics portion of the *CAHSEE*.

- Intensive interventions are intended for middle grade students who are more than two years below grade-level expectations and for high school students who are unable to demonstrate proficiency in the sixth-grade standards in English-language arts or are unable to demonstrate proficiency in the seventh-grade standards in mathematics. These students have the greatest need.

For more information on the Essential Program Components, visit *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/essentialcomp.asp.*

"Noncognitive interventions include a range of programs and strategies that keep students healthy, safe, and engaged in learning."

Prior to needing academic interventions, students may benefit from positive support. Creating a college-going culture at middle school and at high school provides both cognitive and noncognitive support to adolescents and their families as they strive for higher education. There are specific programs designed to foster college preparedness such as GEAR-UP at *http://www.castategearup.org/* and AVID at *http://www.avidonline.org/*. These programs, along with others, can be found on the Academic Preparation Programs Research Information System (APPRIS) database at *http://www.appris.org/.* The APPRIS system provides an accurate, up-to-date snapshot of the myriad programs whose purpose it is to prepare California's kindergarten through twelfth grade students for higher education.

Noncognitive Interventions

Getting Results Update 5—a new publication from the California Department of Education—reviewed research articles published in respected professional journals that showed evidence of a link between student health and academic achievement. The study also explored the relationship between the health of California students and the state's accountability model, the API. Schools with a lower API reported a relatively large number of students with problems such as substance abuse, being threatened or injured, and being charged with weapons possession. Schools with higher API scores had higher percentages of students who were physically active, had good diets, and felt safe at school.

The California Department of Education Web site has information on numerous student support and intervention programs. See "Worth a Click" on page 17.

Student Support and Interventions—What Works?

Secondary students share many similarities in what they need for a successful school experience. Research indicates that there are key components to increasing levels of student achievement: committed teaching staffs; visionary leadership; collegial decision-making; an inviting, safe school environment; high student expectations; and an active engagement in learning. These learning supports are critical at both the middle and high school levels and are recognized by programs such as *Schools to Watch, Distinguished Schools,* and the new *Call to Action* by the National High School Alliance.

Another important characteristic of successful schools is what is referred to as *connectedness.* Study after study indicates that when students are connected to learning and to relationships with peers and adults, they are less disruptive and more successful in academics. Phrases such as student support, asset development, interventions, developmental responsiveness, or school climate are "code" for talking about the importance of creating school communities that connect students to caring adults and to motivational teachers. Educators have known about these concepts for years and are now asking themselves, "What is working?"

Robert Blum makes "A Case for School Connectedness*"* in the April 2005 issue of *Educational Leadership: The Adolescent Learner.* Blum states:

> In this era of accountability and standards, school connectedness can seem like a soft approach to school improvement. It can, however, have a substantial impact on the measures of student achievement for which schools are currently being held accountable (p.16).

To study the relationship between academic success and school connectedness, Blum convened a conference of researchers. From their findings he synthesized three school characteristics that connect students and encourage their academic achievement:

1. High academic standards that are delivered by supportive teachers
2. A school environment that reflects adult and student relationships that are positive and respectful
3. A school environment that is both physically and emotionally safe

Research also shows that students who **feel** connected to school are "less likely to use substances, exhibit emotional distress, demonstrate violent or deviant behavior, experience suicide … and become pregnant" (ibid, p.17). Blum goes on to say that connected students are less likely to skip school or be involved in fighting, bullying, and vandalism—all behaviors that cost schools financially as well as academically.

"Study after study indicates that when students are connected to learning and to relationships with peers and adults, they are less disruptive and more successful in academics."

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Unsafe schools (characterized by bullying, teasing, fights, cliques, and chaos), as well as classrooms staffed with teachers who demonstrate poor management skills, tend to be schools where students feel disconnected.

Consistent rules and zero tolerance policies tend to support school connectedness, but they do not succeed without caring teachers. Blum's research suggests that classroom **culture** appears to influence connectedness more so than class size. Connectedness happens when teachers create high expectations for behavior and performance in a democratically organized, fun learning environment that celebrates successes large and small. In addition, when the school administration supports high expectations for success by calling home every time a student misses school, students start getting the message that the school staff expects **every** child to succeed. No child is expendable.

The conclusions come as no surprise to school climate advocates and are summarized in the following list compiled by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine in *Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2004 p.19; available online at *http://www.nap.edu/books/0309084350/html/*):

Key Components to Increasing Levels of Student Achievement

- Avoid separating students onto vocational or college tracks.
- Set high academic standards for all students and provide all students with the same core curriculum.
- Limit the size of the school to create small learning environments.
- Form multidisciplinary education teams in which groups of teachers work with students.
- Ensure that every student has an advisor.
- Provide mentorship programs.
- Ensure that course content is relevant to the lives of students.
- Provide service-learning and community service projects.
- Provide experiential, hands-on learning opportunities.
- Use a wide variety of instructional methods and technologies.
- Extend the class period, school day, and/or school year.
- Provide opportunities for students who are falling behind to catch up.

What Works from the Students' Perspectives?

In a separate article titled "Student Perceptions of Action, Relevance, and Pace" (*Middle School Journal,* March 2005), Penny Bishop and Susanna Pflaum summarize their research about how to measure middle school students' engagement in learning. They used student interviews and drawings to gain an understanding of what does—and what does not—engage students. Even though the study focuses on middle grade students, its findings are applicable to high school students as well.

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> The obvious outcome of this study is that these middle school students value active approaches to studying relevant curriculum at their own pace. Additionally, collaboration, technology, and choice weave throughout these learning opportunities in compelling ways to enhance student engagement. Less obvious, yet perhaps more important, is inviting middle level learners into the dialogue about learning (p. 10).

It is not surprising that **active learning** engages adolescents. The authors quoted Duckworth's 1996 findings that "Learners come to understanding by being placed in a situation where they develop that understanding, as opposed to being told what they ought to understand."

Another predictable finding based on prior research was that students were much more engaged in projects that were **relevant** to them (Sherer 2002). These projects often involved collaboration with peers, lively discussions, and the use of technology. However, the authors also noted a 1995 National Middle School Association advisory that stated, "Making curriculum relevant does not mean limiting content solely to students' pre-existing interests. Challenging curriculum creates new interests; it opens doors to new knowledge and opportunities; it 'stretches' students" (p. 21).

Finally—and, perhaps most problematical—was students' awareness that learning needed to happen at their own **pace**. One student drew a picture of his head on his desk: "Very mad and bored because … it just takes so long to go over and over and over again. But then after we get that done and I'm like, 'Whew, we're done after, like, a half hour explaining.' But then we do another half hour because he [pointing to another student] doesn't know how to do, like, two to the tenth power" (p. 9).

The authors conclude, "Students value active approaches to studying relevant curriculum at their own pace." In addition, one particularly invaluable student support—that of **hearing** and **respecting** the student—provides a model for how to juggle the needs of 30-plus adolescents in any given class. Give students respect by showing that their perceptions matter, and check in often to make personal connections among people and with the content being taught.

References

Bishop, P., and S. Pflaum, 2005. *Reaching and teaching middle school learners: Asking students to show us what works.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Duckworth, E. 1996. *"The having of wonderful ideas" and other essays on teaching and learning.* New York: Teachers College Press.

National Middle School Association. 1995. *This we believe: Developmentally responsive middle schools.* Columbus, OH: Author.

Sherer, M. 2002. Do students care about learning? A conversation with Hihaly Csikszentmihalyi. *Educational Leadership 60* (1): 12-17.

"Research demonstrates that smaller, more personalized learning environments—as a stand-alone intervention—results in many indicators of student success: higher grades, better attendance, lower discipline rates, higher school completion rates, and higher standardized test scores." [1]

—From *Aiming High*, Chapter 7: Creating Structural Supports for Student Success, p. 92. *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/ahgen.asp*

[1] Kathleen Cotton, *School Size, School Climate, and School Performance*. Portland, Ore.: Northwest Regional Laboratory, 1997. Available on the Web site H*ttp://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/10/c020.htmH/.*

Lowell High School—Preparing Students for Lifelong Success

Lowell High School
San Francisco County
San Francisco Unified School District
1101 Eucalyptus Drive
San Francisco, California
Paul Cheng, Principal
Phone: (415) 759-2730

2005 School Profile

Community: **Urban**
Enrollment: **2,592**
Student Demographics:

- **2.6%** African American not Hispanic
- **0.3%** American Indian or Alaska Native
- **67.2%** Asian
- **5.5%** Filipino
- **5.5%** Hispanic or Latino
- **0.1%** Pacific Islander
- **15.5%** White not Hispanic
- **3.2%** Other

Grade Levels: **9 - 12**
2005 **API: 946 (up 11 points since 2001-02)**
2005 **AYP: Yes***
Free/Reduced Lunch: **27.9%**
English Learners: **0.7%**

* School met 18 of its 18 adequate yearly progress (AYP) criteria.

Lowell High School—a 2005 California Distinguished School—delivers a college-preparatory program to nearly 2,600 socially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students in the oldest public high school west of the Mississippi. Each year, more than 2,000 eighth-grade students from both public and private schools apply for the 650 ninth-grade openings. Students are admitted based on middle school grades, test scores, extra curricular/leadership activities, community service, socioeconomic status, and extenuating or hardship circumstances.

The mission that draws this many students from one of California's most recognized cities is "to ensure that students live up to their potential and make positive contributions to our society and the world community." Lowell's long tradition of academic excellence has earned the school fourth-place ranking by the College Board among more than 15,000 high schools in the number of Advanced Placement exams administered. The school also ranked second in California for the API in 2000, 2001, and 2002, and came in fourth in 2003 and 2004; and earned the National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Award from the U.S. Department of Education in 2001-2002.

It might seem that with a competitive entry process and a nationally recognized program, the school could achieve these successes easily. However, much student support and many interventions help ensure that this diverse student population succeeds.

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Personalized Environment, Student Voice, and Citizenship

Lowell offers a rich and varied life for students. A modular and self-scheduling system allows students to exercise individual choice in selecting classes. Each semester, students register for classes in an "arena" setting that mimics the system used by most colleges. The self-scheduling system supports the school goals of student choice and responsibility while preparing students for the experience of registering for classes when they attend college. During "free mods" (a free module, or block, in their schedule) students have time to use various academic support services, such as resource centers, computer and language labs, and the library.

"Free mods" allow students time to use the library and other academic support services.

The administration team at Lowell encourages all members of the Lowell community to become a part of the shared decision-making process. Students are encouraged to join in a nontraditional student government organization and were included in developing the school's "Expected Schoolwide Learning Results" (ESLRs). The ESLRs are posted in classrooms and on the school's Web site as follows: "Lowell High School will prepare its students to be Pursuers of Academic Excellence, Creative and Critical Thinkers, Effective Communicators and Managers of Information, Positive and Productive Citizens, and Purposeful and Responsible Learners."

The combination of a modular schedule that allows for free time, individualized programs, and the absence of bells all contribute to the growth of students as independent learners who develop close relationships with counselors, teachers, and other students.

Comprehensive Services and Interventions

In most cases, students have the same counselor for four years and develop a close relationship with that adult. To keep students from failure, Lowell automatically sends a letter requesting a parent conference with any student who receives three below "C-" grades at any given time. Students who are on academic probation are connected with resource personnel who arrange for tutors, make connections between core subject teachers and students, and provide study skills assistance. Counselors monitor the progress of each student who is placed on probation. In addition, all at-risk students and special-needs students benefit from the Volunteers in College and Career Information Center that works closely with the counseling department. Three paraprofessionals work in the resource centers, library, and the language lab to provide students with academic support when needed.

Community health, clinical, and social work professionals work in the campus Wellness Center. It assists students with personal, health, and emotional problems. The Wellness Center staff works closely with the counselors to support students who are at risk. At weekly meetings of the Student Assistance Program students who are on probation or at risk are evaluated and plans developed to help the students achieve success.

"Registry" teachers remain with the same group of students for four years and often become a liaison between the school and the students. Students meet individually with their counselor to create or

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revise a four-year graduation plan and to explore career possibilities, postsecondary choices, and other educational interests and options. Counselors make an effort to meet individually with students and to keep track of their progress toward meeting the goals of their postsecondary plans.

The Peer Resource Program provides a variety of services to students, such as peer counseling, peer education, and peer mentoring. The peer resource counselor and trained peer tutors run a drop-in center for tutoring and counseling. They also make presentations regarding “risky” behaviors and student safety to classes. In addition, the 335 California Scholarship Federation students tutored approximately 301 students during the year.

The career/occupational counselor teaches career/vocational courses that integrate classroom learning and on-the-job training to expose students to business concepts, computer literacy, and career exploration. Students produce a career portfolio that demonstrates their mastery of these subjects. Professionals from the community come to the school to make presentations to the nine-week college and career classes. There is also a summer job fair.

In addition to regular and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs, Lowell offers an array of special education services.

Cocurricular Activities

Lowell offers many activities, clubs, and sports for students to join. For example, parents and teachers sponsor more than 80 clubs at the school, including forensics, band, orchestra, choir, architectural design competitions, and science and math contests. There are also 24 athletic teams for students to join, as well as the Academic Decathlon Team. Field trips and college tours are offered through a variety of classes and clubs.

The campus also hosts a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program that develops citizenship skills, leadership potential, logical reasoning, and effective communication as well as physical fitness and teamwork.

The California Scholarship Federation and the Shield and Scroll Honor Society offer leadership and teamwork-building opportunities for students who excel academically and for those who have demonstrated a commitment to service.

Challenges for Staff

In spite of a selective entry process, Lowell students can find themselves overwhelmed by the competition, high expectations, and social or emotional problems that often come with shifting peer and family relationships. It is a challenge to keep the staff alert to signs that students are slipping beneath the weight of academic, social, or emotional problems and to ensure that the planned student support programs work for all students.

Benefits to Students

The challenging curriculum and many after-school enrichment options make Lowell an exciting place to be. Whether they are in special education or Honors/Advanced Placement (AP) classes, all students are known by school personnel and volunteers and can find help when they need it.

Escondido High School—A Professional Learning Community Working for Student Achievement

Escondido High School
San Diego County
Escondido Union High School District
1535 N. Broadway
Escondido, California
Steve Boyle, Principal
Phone: (760) 291-4000
2005 School Profile

Community: **Urban**
Enrollment: **2,659**
Student Demographics:

- **2.7%** African American not Hispanic
- **0.8%** American Indian or Alaska Native
- **3.2%** Asian
- **3.0%** Filipino
- **49.2%** Hispanic or Latino
- **0.3%** Pacific Islander
- **40.4%** White
- **0.5%** Other

Grade Levels: **9-12**
2005 **API: 701 (up 88 points since 2001-02)**
2005 **AYP: Yes***
Free/Reduced Lunch: **13.3%**
English Learners: **19.4%**

* School met 22 of its 22 adequate yearly progress (AYP) criteria.

In 2005, only three California high schools earned both the California Distinguished School and the Title 1 Academic Achievement Award. Escondido High School (EHS) is proud to be one of the three, particularly since only eight high schools in the state earned the Title 1 award. Title 1 requires schools to double all subgroup scores, especially those for the economically disadvantaged students. The awards for Escondido are notable since nearly a quarter of the student population is designated as EL (English learner). More than 100 EL students are redesignated each year due to a strong team of teachers in English language development.

This is not the first time Escondido High has received the California Distinguished School award; the first award was in 1996. However, four years ago EHS was placed in the Immediate Intervention/ Underperforming School Program. That wake-up call was followed by four years in which the school exceeded the API growth target score, all subgroups made their API growth targets, and the school more than doubled its Advanced Placement enrollment. The 88-point increase in API for four years demonstrates Escondido High's commitment to excellence.

Personalized Environment, Student Voice, and Citizenship

School staff has a commitment to providing a warm, caring, and engaging environment and uses the Rick DuFour Professional Learning Community model for all vision-setting, decision-making,

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and curriculum planning. The school leadership is committed to a caring, team-based environment and provides substitute teachers, refreshments, release time, and other resources needed to foster collaborative decision making.

Because teachers believe their opinions matter, they are committed to ensuring that students receive the same consideration. As one visitor commented, “From the moment you step on the campus, people treat you with warmth and respect. There’s always a friendly face to greet you, and it’s obvious that these people care about each other.”

The members of the BEST Buddies Club won state and national honors for the work they perform to support special education students’ integration into the fabric of school life.

Comprehensive Services and Interventions

At Escondido High, the classroom is the major intervention strategy. The staff members believe that since they can capture only some students in after-school or tutoring programs, they need to make the classroom interactions work for *every* student.

According to school staff, the most successful interventions resulted from staff and individual professional development in English and math. The training showed teachers how to design lessons that address the standards and how to make sure students have opportunities to see materials in different ways.

For example, the math teams have had extensive “Lesson Study” training with Tom Bennett, a professor at California State University, San Marcos. Through the training, teams have learned to design collaborative lessons centered on the standards. A key part of the planning is to ask the question “How will we know when students get it?”

To find out, they observe their team lesson plan in action. One day, all the math team members are released from teaching through the hiring of substitutes. During the first math block, one teacher teaches the new lesson while the other 12 teachers observe. In the second block, teachers meet to critique the lesson and redesign it. In the third block, a different teacher teaches the redesigned lesson while the team again observes—specifically to see if they can tell when and why the students now “get” the concept. If the students are not getting the lesson concepts, the team asks, “Why?” Looking at what allows the student to learn helps the staff members to become reflective practitioners. The math teams also collaborate to design projects (especially for algebra) so that students can see how the lesson concepts apply to real-life situations.

The English-language arts teachers collaborate in grade-level teams and work on designing common assessments, looking at standards-based lessons, and aligning the curriculum vertically. In the 2004-05 year, the teams focused on the writing process. In the 2003-04 year, they targeted literary analysis. Although the language arts teams have not done lesson studies to the same degree as the math team, they have devoted a lot of time every week after school and at lunch to see what is working in their lessons and ensure that lessons are aligned with the standards. For example, the language arts team spent considerable time creating graphic organizers to focus on vocabulary development.

A crucial step toward making the classroom the key intervention has been to ensure that all students learn the content standards and understand the reasons behind the lessons and the testing. To

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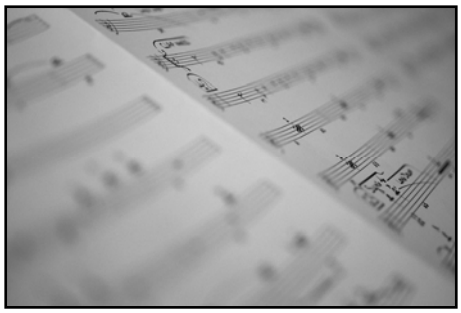
ensure testing makes sense to the students, the school conducts a comprehensive public relations campaign to show students the importance of doing well on the tests—for both the school's success and for meeting their personal goals.

Before each testing cycle in the spring, a motivational speaker addresses the students at a schoolwide assembly on achieving excellence, and the Academic Performance Index (API) targets are posted in each room. After receiving testing results, the school hosts an awards ceremony. Students with scores in the top percentiles and those who have improved their personal scores are honored.

Age-Appropriate Cocurricular Activities



The EHS school band has taken first place in three field show competitions.

Students can choose from a wide array of cocurricular activities at EHS. Along with the traditional sports, dances, and clubs, there are several activities that are unique to Escondido. The Interact Club—sponsored by the Rotary Club — supports the Youth Reading Role Model program. Students in the club volunteer to read to preschoolers in the community. Agriculture and Future Farmers of America programs prepare students to compete in the county fair. The students also host an annual Farm Day for more than 600 elementary students. The school's athletic program has captured ten league titles and three county championships over the past two years, and the school band has taken first place in three different field show competitions.

Challenges for Staff

Part of the school's Western Association of Schools and Colleges action plan called for the staff to be more systematic in how it approaches data. Staff members plan to use data to inform instruction before administering the California Standards Tests. This year, their data analysis showed a 5 percent jump in junior test scores. Teachers are seeing the rewards. They have realized that they need to change to get change. They are beginning to be comfortable using data to develop common assessments. However, to be able to look at the results, the school staff still needs more structured time in collaborative teams.

According to the principal, interventions are not the heart and soul of the improvement efforts. One key to success at EHS has been to provide all teachers with lots of information on their students (for example, Standardized Testing and Reporting, California High School Exit Examination, and common assessment results.)

Benefits to Students

A tremendous surge of school spirit is fueled by great community support—many of the community members are alumni of the school. Community support for the school resulted in $13 million worth of renovations and new buildings to provide a positive learning environment for students and staff. Students make a genuine effort and are rewarded by caring adults who cheer them on to excellence.

Awards assemblies recognize students who score in the top 20 percent and those who improve their test scores. Banners and other posted media build pride in the school. In addition, the school staff

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has found ways to share successes all year long. For example, midterm or mid-semester successes result in a ticket for an ice cream sandwich. “Score bar” treats honor the school population for four years of improvement.

After the initial shock of being identified as an underperforming school, the students seem to have caught the excitement of improvement, and each year the school staff hangs posters showing the new targets. Teachers talk about how important the tests are for college, career, and school success. They also share district comparisons to show the students how well they are achieving in comparison to the rest of the state. Students are proud of their achievements.

Getting Results: Health Risk and API Scores

The spring 2005 Healthy Kids report—*Getting Results: Developing Safe and Healthy Kids, Update* 5, *Student Health, Supportive Schools, and Academic Success*—shows positive correlations between academic achievement and the building blocks of healthy development. The report discusses 40 developmental assets as identified by the Search Institute in 1997 (see http://*www.search-institute.org/*).

In the new Healthy Kids study, researchers examined how API scores were related to three types of health-related barriers to learning: (1) poor physical health indicators, such as lack of exercise and inadequate nutrition; (2) alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, including use at school; and (3) violence, victimization, harassment, and lack of safety at school. The research demonstrated that each of those types of health risks may be reduced through school-based, programmatic interventions and that each type was related to learning and academic performance:

> . . . schools with lower API scores were characterized by relatively large numbers of students who reported high levels of substance use, who used substances or had been offered or sold drugs on school property, who had been threatened or injured with weapons, and who attended schools with high levels of weapons possession. Those schools that have high percentages of students who (1) engage in moderate physical activity; (2) eat nutritious food and breakfast daily; (3) feel safe and secure at school; and (4) have high levels of school external assets have higher API scores than do other schools.

The findings indicate that targeted programs, such as school nutrition, drug and alcohol intervention, and school safety interventions, have a positive impact on student achievement. The study also highlighted the positive impacts of high expectations for student achievement, caring relationships, and meaningful participation at school.

Chapter 4 of the study is devoted to recommendations for putting the research into action. The study concludes by stating, “School organizational variables most important to academic success are effective classroom management; quantity of instructional time; positive and productive student/teacher interactions; a classroom climate conducive to learning; and a peer culture supportive of academic achievement.”

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The complete text of *Getting Results, Update 5* is available on the California Department of Education Web site at *http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fd/documents/getresultsupdate5.pdf/.*

Technology Contributes to Both Cognitive and Noncognitive Skills

Self-confidence, motivation, perseverance, time management, communication and problem-solving skills, and the ability to work collaboratively with others are highly valued noncognitive traits that contribute to student success. Richard Rothstein, a research associate of the Economic Policy Institute, asserts that noncognitive skills, although not included in state-mandated standardized tests, are at least as important and are perhaps even more important to students than cognitive skills ([1]Rothstein 2004; [2] West, Germino-Hausken, and Collins 1993). Noncognitive skill sets are sought by employers. These attributes often determine whether or not students will have a successful school experience and may even determine future earning potential ([3]Holzer 2000; [4]Rosenbaum 2000).

Technology plays an important role in building students' cognitive and noncognitive skills. At-risk students, especially socioeconomically disadvantaged students, find reasons to attend school and stay involved. Here are some examples.

Val Verde Continuation High School

In an environment too often marked by gang violence, students attending Val Verde Continuation High in Riverside County have found success and personal accomplishment through [5]Mr. Del Campo's video production class. In 2004, the student video creation titled, "For Life", a thoughtful, poignant film written to dissuade teens from gang life, won four separate category awards in Panasonic's Kid Witness News Contest. Students who worked on this project learned animation and editing skills along with specific software applications. The process of video production required students to focus attention, keep on task and within a time line, work together as part of a team, and practice effective communication skills. The project may have supplied the hook that the students needed to motivate, engage, and challenge them, while at the same time keeping them in school.

West Campus High School

Students enrolled in the Environmental and Spatial Technology class in Sacramento City Unified's West Campus High School used their skills and state-of-the-art technology resources to assist the local fire department in identifying and tracking a serial arsonist. Facilitated by [6]Ms. Thoene, students reviewed arson incident reports to determine data categories and then used report information to populate the database with information that included location, time, date, origin, size, and type of fire. These data were then used in conjunction with sophisticated software to plot onto a virtual map, allowing arsonist patterns to be viewed in a graphic, rather than in a text format. Pattern analysis is one of the most successful techniques fire departments use to locate serial arsonists. Students who worked on this project gained personal skills in the areas of problem solving, meeting facilitation, oral and written communication, collaboration, and time management.

Calipatria High School

Led by Superintendent [7]James Hanks and Principal [8]Virginia Calsada, Imperial County's Calipatria High implemented an aquaculture program for students that brings together multidisciplinary content,

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21st Century skill development, and technology. Students enrolled in the elective class raise fish that will be used for food and to stock nearby lakes. Students learn about horticulture as they experiment with a variety of vegetables that are hydroponically grown (i.e., cultivating plants in nutrient solution rather than in soil). In this hands-on learning environment, students understand and routinely utilize sophisticated technology for regulating water temperature, oxygen flow, nutrients, and the solar panels that provide the renewable energy for the facility.

Technology has contributed to both cognitive and noncognitive development for students as they incorporate project management, oral and written communication and problem solving skills, patience, and collaboration with teachers and other students as they work through the steps required for a successful outcome.

Interviews with staff and administration from all three of the above examples confirmed that these highlighted projects could not have been accomplished without the judicious integration and use of technology. Students' cognitive and noncognitive skills were enhanced as a result of technology utilization. In addition to improved oral and written communication skills, collaboration, problem solving, and motivation for learning and accomplishing goals, students who regularly utilized technology in the learning environment showed increased attendance and decreased discipline problems.

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By Joyce Hinkson, Consultant, Middle and High School Improvement Office

Eleven California High Schools Win Awards for Exemplary Counseling and Student Support Programs

State Superintendent Jack O'Connell has recognized 11 California high schools as the 2005 **"Best in the West"** for providing exemplary counseling and student support programs.

All 11 schools provided evidence of meeting the stringent standards of the National Model for School Counseling Programs. The National Model delineates how a comprehensive, school-based, student support system can increase achievement, program efficiency, and accountability. It was developed from a 2001 "national summit" of school counselors and is sponsored by the American School Counselor Association. The model provides a common mechanism by which school counseling teams can design, coordinate, implement, manage, and evaluate their programs to maximize student success.

At schools implementing the National Model, counselors "switch their emphasis from service-centered for *some* students to program-centered for *every* student." Under the model, counselors ask themselves, "How are students different as a result of what we do?" Then counselors expect to find significant results.[2]

California has extended the national model by developing its own Support Personnel Accountability Report Card (SPARC), which provides schools and districts with an accountability structure for their school counseling and guidance programs. The CDE is currently preparing a document titled **Guidelines for a Comprehensive School Guidance and Counseling Program** that will highlight the SPARC as a valuable tool for implementing a comprehensive schoolwide counseling program. The guidelines include components for personal/social, career, and academic areas.

Each year, the California Association of School Counselors gives "Academy Awards" to schools with outstanding counseling programs as measured by the SPARC assessment. Schools that receive an "academy award" for three consecutive years are given the highest award—"The Best in the West"—for having an exemplary program of counseling and student support.

2005 Best in the West Recipients

Alhambra City School District
San Gabriel High School

Arcadia Unified School District
Arcadia High School

Baldwin Park Unified School District
Baldwin Park High School
Sierra Vista High School

Centinela Valley Union High School District
Hawthorne High School
Lawndale High School

Rowland Unified School District
Nogales High School
Santana Continuation High School

West Covina Unified School District
Coronado Alternative School
West Covina High School

Brea Olinda Unified School District
Brea Olinda High School

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[2] T. Hatch and J. Bowers, *Blocks to Build On: Elements of ASCA's National School Counseling Programs.* Alexandria, Va.: American School Counselor Association, 2004, p.15.

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By George Montgomery, Education Programs Consultant

Worth a Click

California Department of Education (CDE) Student Support and Intervention Programs. Link to the following CDE resources for more information about support and intervention programs:

- Attendance Improvement: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/*
- Before and After School: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ba/*
- Class Size Reduction: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cs/*
- Counseling and Student Support: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/*
- Dropout Prevention: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ai/dp/sb65progsumm.asp*
- Educational Options: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/eo/*
- Education Technology: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cs/*
- English Learners: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/*
- Facilities: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/*
- Foster Youth: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/fy/*
- Health: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/*
- Nutrition: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/*
- Parent/Family/Community: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/*
- School Libraries: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb/*
- School Safety: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/*
- Special Education: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/*
- Transportation: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/tn/*
- Youth Development: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/yd/.*

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CDE Conference Calendar. Identifies statewide and national education conferences and workshops of interest to educators, parents, and students: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/ca/cc/.*

Funding: CDE Administered. Search CDE funding by fiscal year, type, status, topic, keyword(s), or any combination. Use Advanced Search for more choices: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/sf/.*

Funding: Outside CDE. State, federal, and other funding opportunities administered by agencies outside the CDE: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/of/ap/.*

Virtual Library. Collection of resources that may be helpful for districts that have high-priority schools: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/.*

Join the High School E-mail List

Join the CDE High School listserv at *http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/hsmail.asp* to receive notices about high school related information and upcoming *High School!* periodical issues.

To view current and past *High School!* periodical issues visit: *http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/nl/hischlnwsltr.asp.*

Please send your comments or suggestions to *HiNet@cde.ca.gov.* Your ideas and suggestions are welcome.

HIGH SCHOOL!

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